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Comparative-Religion Notes.

Comparative-Religion at Yale.—Dr. Arthur Fairbanks of Yale University offers this year the following courses in Comparative Religion to the Graduate Department: "The History of Religion," an introductory course in which the religions of India and Persia are made the basis of the work; "The Beginnings of Religion," in which two or three types of religion among uncivilized tribes are studied to show the forms which religion may assume in the lowest stages of civilization, and questions arising in connection with these studies are taken up; "Semitic Religion," with special reference to the religion of Israel; "Inscriptions relating to the Greek Religion;" "Greek Worship and Belief," being readings from Pausanias with lectures. Dr. Fairbanks offers in addition courses of University Extension lectures on "The Greek Gods in Art and Worship" and "The Immortality of the Soul and Greek Ideas of the Future Life," with illustrations. It is most gratifying to friends of this new science to know that it is so worthily represented at Yale University.

WHAT DID THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS ACCOMPLISH?

A daily newspaper of Chicago published on September 27, 1895,—the second anniversary of the Parliament of Religion,—a symposium of opinions from eminent men in literature and religion as to its results. Some of the opinions are worthy of notice by a wider circle than that which they originally reached.

DR. J. H. BARROWS, the organizer and chairman of the Parliament wrote:

"Among the interesting effects of the world's parliament of religions I may mention the following: The emphasizing of the spiritual forces in history at the time of a great material exhibition; the setting forth of the ethical and some of the other unities in the religions of the world; the gaining of truer and more sympathetic views on ethnic religions; the demonstration of the unity of the great churches of christendom on many of the vital questions of belief; the diffusion of a vast amount of information, through the literature of the parliament, in regard to the world's religions; a more intelligent interest in Christian missions and the growing conviction that they need to be conducted with wider knowledge and larger sympathy; the building of the Haskell Oriental Museum; the establishment of two lectureships, one in Chicago and the other in Calcutta, having for their purpose the discussion of the relations of Christianity with the other faiths; the breaking down of many barriers of prejudice between men of opposing opinions; the world-wide discussion of the problems of comparative religion; the rapid issue of new books bearing on this theme; the increasing interest in the reunion of christendom; the growing belief that men ought coöperate more generally for common good ends."

The opinion of PROFESSOR C. M. TYLER, professor of Religion in Cornell University was that

"It was a colossal advance toward the final synthesis of religious opinions upon the oasis of essential Christianity. A Christian philosophy of religion, which still incorporate all that is divine in the ethnic consciousness, win the respect of all peoples outside of Christendom, and secure an audience for the message of Christ is now made to be not a distant reality. To bring the earnest seekers of religious truth together from all lands into such a parliament to unite in the Lord's prayer was perhaps the sublimest event since the advent, and the mutual respect begotten of such a personal contact, of comparison of beliefs and hopes, and of an intellectual ascent to a higher recognition of the fellowship of God, has done more than the work of centuries in leveling barriers which have separated the nations. The atmosphere has been charged with electric sympathy."

REV. J. S. CHANDLER, missionary at Madura, So. India, thought that religions "must be tested by the actual life and character of the followers of each religion, and their capacity for overcoming the sins that hinder their growth into the likeness to God. I think the parliament failed in supplying any tests of these higher functions of religions. It has done good in India, but the undue praise given to it and the exaggerated claims made for it have tended to belittle the power of the new life in Christ."

TO PROFESSOR JOHN BASCOM the value of the Parliament lay in the fact that "It brought together those who could offer in their most vital forms the faiths of the world, and enabled us to measure the spiritual forces operative among men. This knowledge was necessary for a successful propagation of Christianity, and the Parliament furnished it. It also imparted a new sense to the spiritual world and God's methods in that world, which is clearly manifest in broader views."

DR. EDWARD EVERETT HALE said: "The Parliament of Religions was a good plan as an agent in checkmating bigotry. I do not think any special speeches were of remarkable value. It is the exhibition of the possibility of 'together' which seems to me important."

PROFESSOR WILLIS J. BEECHER, of Auburn Seminary, found the importance of the Parliament in its proclamation of Christianity.

"I know of no other event for several decades that has so clearly published the challenge of Christianity to the other religions, and to the human reason and conscience. There is a sense in which Christianity is hostile to all other religions, and a sense in which what we call evangelical Christianity is hostile to the forms of Christianity we call less pure; but this does not change the obligation of evangelical Christianity to understand and correctly weigh the other religions. In helping to this understanding the Parliament has been of value."

The statement of PROFESSOR JAMES DRUMMOND, of Oxford, emphasized the tendency illustrated by the Parliament.

"It showed that a deep undercurrent of change had been in progress in the modes of thought, and still more, perhaps, in the sentiments with which the various religions have been regarded by their adherents. If no immediate and palpable results are visible, still we cannot doubt that that remarkable expression

of one of the most hopeful tendencies of our time has revived and encouraged many a quiet worker and opened new channels of divine influence in many countries. We cannot determine the energy of spiritual things by weight and balance, but we can see more clearly than before that the spirit of God is working in the hearts of man."

COUNT A. BERNSTORFF, of Berlin, wrote : "The lesson of the Parliament and its abiding results is religious tolerance. Representatives of Christian denominations, Mohammedans, Buddhists and adherents of other faiths were accorded the same privileges. We showed to the world that Christians need fear no comparison or discussion with other religions."

PROFESSOR FRANCIS BROWN of Union Theological Seminary, New York, wrote in the same vein :

"The comparisons instituted were such as a confident and conquering religion like Christianity need not fear to challenge ; the spectacle of such a challenge was inspiring, and the results have been instructive. I am sure that while the Christian progress of the next decade needs to be no less zealous and devotedly spiritual than hitherto, it needs also to command a wide outlook, to exhibit a profound sympathy and to expect various differences in externals and nonessentials, as developed by the habits and capacities of various peoples."

A somewhat more unfavorable view was presented by BISHOP CHENEY of the Reformed Episcopal Church.

"I believe that while the Congresses of the Parliament of Religions may have had some influence in bringing the different branches of the Christian church into a better understanding, yet its attempt to place such religions as Buddhism, Confucianism and Mohammedanism on the same level with Christianity has in my estimation by no means tended to advance the cause of the Christian religion."

RABBI EMIL G. HIRSCH of Chicago was most pessimistic.

"We met and had a good time, and that is about all there is of it. The churches are no nearer together than they were, and no faith so far as I know has been in the least modified. It is true that interest in ethnic religions has been aroused, but I think that that interest is chiefly of the curiosity order. I doubt if the Oriental faiths will have any special influence on the Occidental religions."

BISHOP AMES of the African Methodist Church was much more enthusiastic. He wrote that

"Nothing that has occurred since Martin Luther appeared before the Diet at Worms and laid the foundations of religious liberty and set the forces of Protestantism in motion can compare in any degree with what the Parliament of Religions that was held in Chicago in 1893 has accomplished. It has taught the world the great lesson of religious toleration and brought the representative children of God to sit down and feast at the same table in harmony and in peace. The teachers and philosophers of the Orient returned to their homes convinced that Christianity is superior to all of the natural religions in solving the mysterious problems of matter, of the world, of man, of sin, and of the final destiny of man."

Thus wise men differ about this event now in the past as they differed in their prophecies when it was yet in the future. The Parliament is still an enigma.